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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with different support systems available for teachers and stresses the importance of inservice teacher education. The first section discusses teachers' support systems, which usually include six domains: self, family, friends, job, community, and profession. Five models are used to describe the intensity of support of each domain and the interrelatedness of each of these forms of support. The second section deals with inservice education for teaching effectiveness. It is noted that these inservice activities can occur whenever an individual teacher, a group of teachers, an administrator, parents, students, or the profession feels the need, and that inservice education can be either informal, ad hoc, or structured. Seven steps are presented for developing structured inservice education for teachers: (1) select tentative inservice topics based on input from teachers, supervisors, and others; (2) define teaching effectiveness in relation to tentative topic; (3) measure current levels of effectiveness relative to all topics; (4) determine which topics will receive inservice resources; (5) select strategy for inservice education; (6) conduct inservice activities; and (7) evaluate inservice activities. The relationship between inservice education, support systems, and effective teaching is the topic of section three. (JMK)

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SUPPORT SYSTEMS
INSERVICE EDUCATION
TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

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Paper Presented
at
Association of Teacher Educators

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INTRODUCTION

It is impossible to read journals and magazines whose intended audience is teachers without noting the number of articles discussing stress. The causes of teacher stress and the ways to reduce it are frequent subjects at professional meetings of teachers, administrators, and teacher educators. It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss stress per se but rather to deal with inservice education, teacher support systems and the interaction between the two as they relate to teaching effectiveness. The reduction in teacher stress should be a byproduct.

The importance of support systems for teachers and teaching effectiveness is found not so much in research literature as in the assumptions underlying worker effectiveness. Teachers, like other workers, need a feeling of accomplishment as they go about their responsibilities. Most teachers rely on some form of support from others to provide this feeling of self-worth. When all of a teacher's support systems fail, that teacher is likely to feel a disfunctional amount of stress.

Teachers spend about half of their waking hours at school and several others in school related tasks. Therefore, it seems reasonable that schools should seek to provide additional support systems for teachers. Can inservice education serve as one form of support for teachers? How can schools build support systems into inservice education?

This paper is divided into three sections. The first will deal with support systems of teachers, the second with inservice education for teaching effectiveness and the third will discuss the relationship between effective teaching, inservice education, and support systems.

SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR TEACHERS

Domains Of A Teacher's Life

Individuals tend to function best in a supportive environment. A supportive environment enhances an individual's feelings of self-worth by providing encouragement for going beyond the minimum expectations. Persons playing a part in another individual's supportive environment provide both positive and negative feedback about the behavior of the individual but do it in a way that is constructive rather than destructive.

Teachers, like most other individuals, live in more than one environment or domain. The quality of the support system an individual has developed in one domain may be drastically different than that developed in another domain. For purposes of discussion let us consider that each individual lives in at least six different environments or domains including, but not necessarily limited to, the following. Each domain might provide some sort of support system for the individual.

1. Self
2. Family
3. Friends
4. Job
5. Community
6. Profession

The personal domain of an individual is the most private of the six. It includes those inner resources that are available to be called upon when

support is needed. For example, a teacher who has experienced a bad day of teaching might draw upon personal resources for support while another teacher experiences the same negative type day would be unable to call upon personal resources and would seek another system for support. Personal resources include experience, abilities, problem solving techniques, self-esteem, etc.

The family domain includes the members of one's nuclear or extended family with whom the individual maintains close interpersonal relationships. It might include parents, siblings, spouses and/or children. Some individuals maintain close relationships with more distant relatives. Others are not able to use family members for support. In some families the support system simply has not been developed. For some individuals there are no family members available who could provide a support system.

The friends domain includes those persons with whom an individual has developed a sharing interpersonal relationship. Friends, in this instance, should not be confused with acquaintances one sees frequently. Some individuals have no real friends. Others are fortunate enough to have several and have effectively formed mutual support systems.

Job relationships are formed with those working at the same job or in the same building. For teachers it is fellow teachers, administrators, supervisors, students, and other staff members including counselors, nurses, custodians, cooks, etc. Members of this potential support group are neither pre-selected by fate as in the case of one's family nor totally self-selected as in the case of one's friends. There is considerable overlap between the work domain and the friend domain for some teachers. For other teachers friends and co-workers are kept as two separate and distinct groups.

The community domain of an individual's life is a function of the neighborhood, city or town where one has chosen to live. It may have been chosen with particular objectives in mind relating to convenience and support or it may have been rather hap hazzardly selected. It may have been selected by another member of the family rather than by the individual. Involvement in the community and the development of support systems from the community varies from teacher to teacher. Some become quite involved in neighborhood activities, civic organizations, churches, social organizations and engage in local political activity. This involvement provides considerable opportunity for the development of support systems. Other individuals maintain households that are isolated islands in the community. Some teachers share a community domain with their pupils while others live in communities distinctly separate from their schools.

The professional or career domain of the teacher is similar to the job related domain in some ways but frequently is more long term. Some school districts routinely rotate teachers from building to building requiring changes of relationships in the job domain but not within the professional domain. Participation in professional organizations or in professional activities may provide a support system for some teachers. Professional development which includes returning to colleges and universities for courses, workshops or advanced degrees provides a teacher with another possible support system.

Individual teachers vary in the support systems they have available. Some teachers have chosen to ignore sources of support. Some teachers have been unable to develop a series of support systems for themselves. Some have one system they rely upon and fail to develop any other system.

Some teachers find one of the domains a source of turmoil rather than a source of support. This occurs in the personal domain when an individual may have experienced an event which caused considerable lowering of the self-concept such as a "reduction in force" notice or a confrontation with a dissatisfied parent. A divorce or death may cause disruptions in the support provided by the family domain. For new teachers just graduated from college a disruption in the friendship domain as a source of support is likely. Increased distances, personal demands of changing roles from student to adult, changes in marital status and anxiety over new job adjustments makes it difficult for old friends to continue to provide support.

A teacher new to a school needs time to establish a support system in the school. Conflict between teachers, or changes in administrators may disrupt a usually supportive atmosphere within a school. Disagreements with neighbors or community disasters such as fire and floods in a community can create turmoil for a teacher which requires support. Changes in professional organization leadership which the teacher views as negative can alter that source of support.

It is helpful to use models to describe the intensity of support of each domain and the interrelatedness of each of these forms of support. Five models are shown indicating some of the support system patterns a teacher might form. The center of each support system is the personal domain. For some teachers this circle is large. This individual needs to rely on others for support less frequently or less intensely than individuals whose inner circle is small. Varying sizes of the outer circles indicate the strength of the family, job, friends, community or profession as a support system. Circles overlap when two systems are interdependent as when one both receives support

from and provides support to family members or when one's friends and co-workers are the same.

Figure 1 represents a teacher who derives considerable satisfaction and support from the job. It might come from students or co-workers or combinations of the two. There is some involvement with family but little with the community, the profession or from friends. Figure 2 represents an individual with fairly balanced support from family, friends, work, community and profession but with little overlap between groups. Figure 3 shows considerable overlap and involvement with friends and work, no family, some community and little professional support. Figure 4 shows an individual with little self-support relying heavily on community and family, some support from co-workers, a small but supportive friends system with little professional involvement. Figure 5 shows a moderate self with large but not intense support from the five groups. The five groups are distinct and separate.

Support - Non-Support - Negative Support

Support has several meanings:

1. to take the side of
2. to carry the burden of
3. to put up with
4. to bolster up
5. to maintain
6. to hold up
7. to carry

The same person can be both a supporter or be supported depending upon the circumstances. Relationships between people can, when the need arises, be:

1. mutually supportive
2. A can be the supported and B the supporter
3. B can be the supported and A the supporter
4. Several can be supported by A
5. Several can be required to support A

Each of the six domains - self, family, friends, community, job, and profession is a potential source for a teacher when support is needed.

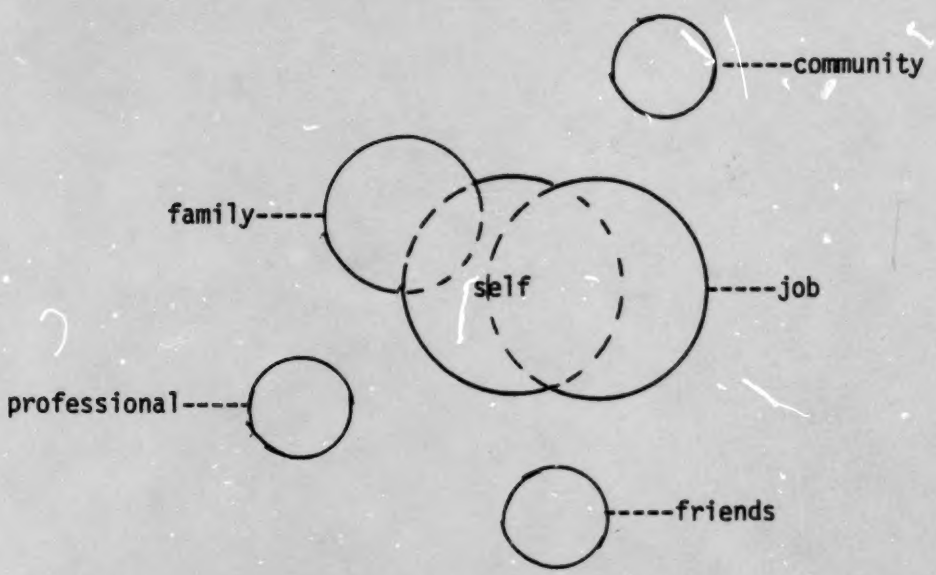


FIGURE 1

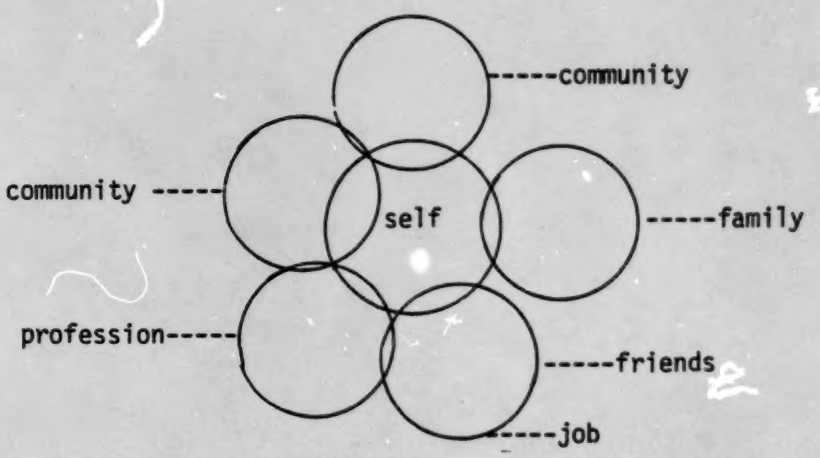
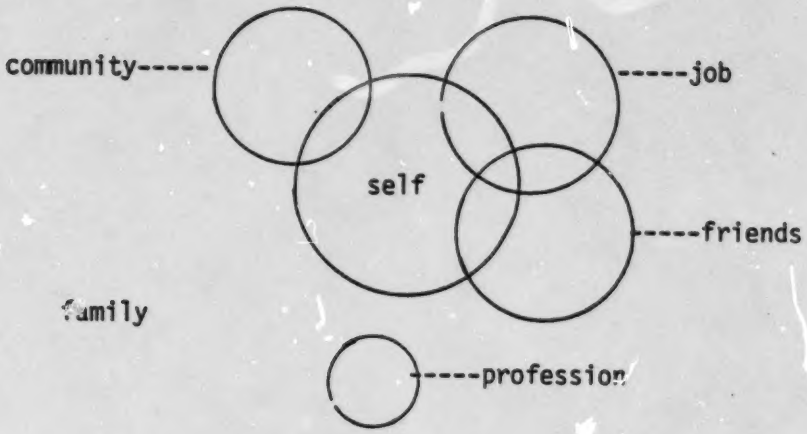


FIGURE 2



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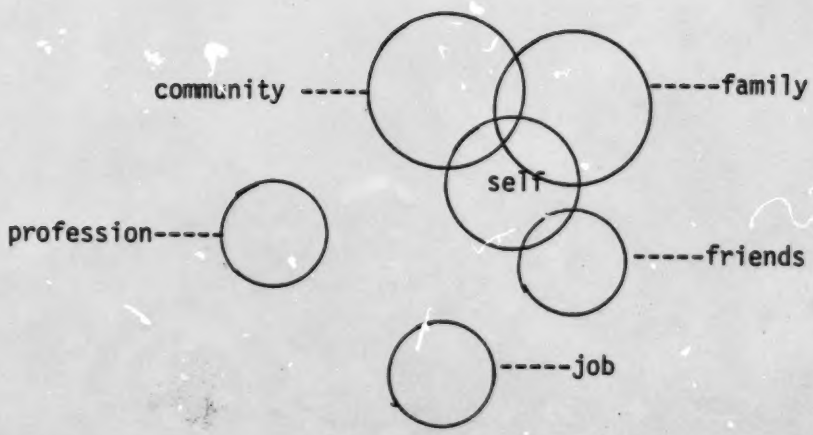

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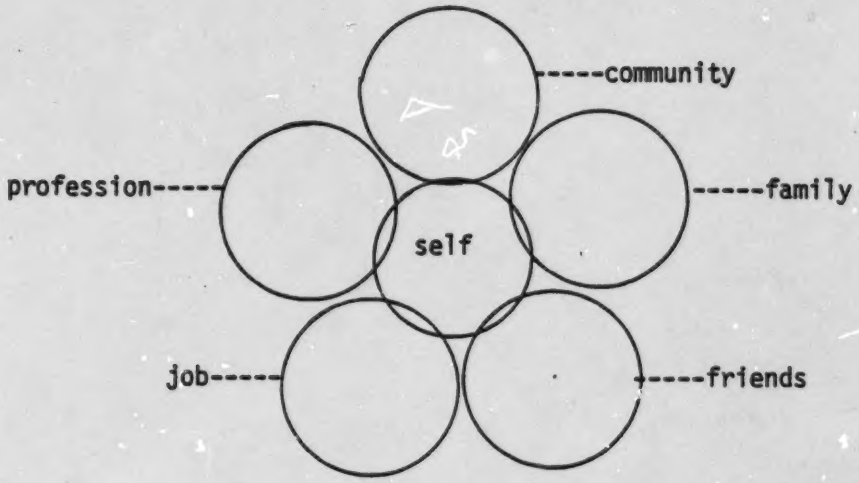

FIGURE 5

When an adequate amount of support is being provided an individual feels secure. Someone will be there when needed. Positive and negative feedback are provided and the individual is able to balance freedom with responsibility.

Any of these six domains may at times, fail to provide positive support to an individual. For a variety of reasons people do not provide positive support to family, friends, neighbors, and associates as frequently as they provide neutral support. In fact, much of the behavior of one person toward another is best characterized as neutral. Sometimes associates, family members, and others engage in the opposite of positive support or negative support. The principal reprimands the teacher when errors in judgement are made and ignores the teacher when judgements are appropriate. A faculty member may be quick to complain when not released from lunch duty on time but rarely comments when released ahead of time. Neighbors may be quick to complain about finding your dog in their yard the first time it dug under the fence but not seem to notice the fact you avoid mowing the lawn while they entertain in their yard. Each of the preceeding are neutral support occassionally interspersed with negative support.

Interrelatedness of Support Systems

As indicated earlier, one source of support may be related to another source. Teachers have friends who are also teachers. Therefore they may understand when it may be necessary to provide support better than friends who have no idea what it is like to manage a classroom full of lively third graders. Some families understand the normal pressures of teaching better than others and seem to provide "a little extra" at grade card time, Christmas programs or other times when the teacher is feeling overwhelmed.

It is important for teachers and school personnel to take the time to develop more than one support system. When one of the systems is handing out negative support the teacher needs to call on one or more of the other systems. For example, when one of the teachers who is a single parent is coping with a moody teenager at home it is essential that another support system from work, friends, community or other family members be able to provide support during that period. A teacher whose sole support system is the school could be devestated when a "reduction in force" puts that teacher on the unemployment line.

Building Effective Support Systems Within A School

As shown in figures one through five, the sources of support for teachers varies from individual to individual. There are several reasons why school administrators, supervisors, etc., in a school would be concerned about the school itself providing adequate support for teachers. Although support through adequate material resources, time and space, is essential for effective teaching it is not sufficient to enable teachers to do their best. Merit pay to excellent teachers has not been shown to improve the overall

quality of teaching or to improve the morale within a building. If not more pay, or the improvement of resources alone, then what can school personnel do to improve the quality of support and improve teaching effectiveness? In a period retrenchment, what can be done to offset the effects of reduced funding for salaries, supplies and materials? Obviously the concerned administrator is interested in providing support for effective teaching even though resources are limited.

Three basic steps should be followed when administrators are concerned about effective support for effective teaching.

1. Determine current sources of support for each teacher. Obtain data from teachers themselves rather than making assumptions based on demographic data. The teacher who is a single parent may have far more family support than is found in the typical two parent family.

2. Evaluate your school as a source of support for teachers. There is very little if anything the school either can or should do about family, friends, or community support systems or the lack there of. Look at school procedures, interaction opportunities and patterns, and interpersonal dynamics. Focus on possible sources of support, non-support, and negative support for each teacher in the building.

3. Make appropriate changes in structure and procedures. Focus first on removing as much negative support as possible.

INSERVICE EDUCATION FOR IMPROVING TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Inservice education can be defined as any activity designed for or entered into by a teacher for the express purpose of improving teaching effectiveness. It could be teacher initiated, administrator initiated or profession initiated. It could involve one teacher, two or more in a small group or the entire system. It could focus on personal, family or professional

issues, as long as the end result is improved teaching effectiveness. It can be informal and of short duration or long term and highly structured or anything in between.

Initiators of Inservice Activities

Inservice activities for teachers and other school employees occur in schools whenever someone feels a need either for themselves or for someone else. This need could be felt by any of the following:

1. Individual teacher
2. Group of teachers
3. Administrator or Supervisor
4. Profession
5. Parents
6. Students

The improvement of instruction is not the only reason for inservice activity. Individual teachers might enroll in university courses or degree programs or collect continuing education credit not for the purpose of improving their teaching but to advance on the salary schedule, get tenure, improve their chances of surviving a "reduction in force", to meet friends, as a status symbol or to advance to administrative or counseling position to get out of classroom. Administrators and supervisors might plan a particular inservice activity because it is part of the contract with the teachers organization, because all the other principals are having this speaker, or to solve the problem of one or two teachers without confronting them directly. The professional organization might provide inservice activities to perpetuate the jobs of the people in the organization, to collect research data or to fulfill the contractual terms of a grant.

Individual teachers who desire to improve teaching effectiveness can engage in several activities. They might enroll in workshops and courses offered by universities and colleges. Some will later enroll in degree programs. They can attend professional meetings at the local, state, and national level. Some will become involved in the structure of one or more of these organizations. Teachers can read literature on teaching effectiveness. Some will initiate inschool or area wide inservice activities.

Groups of teachers who desire to engage in activities to improve effectiveness can and do engage in the activities that are available to individual teachers. However, because several have the same need their success at initiating either informal or formal local inservice activity is greater than when only one teacher needs or desires an inservice activity. For example, several teachers interested in learning the aspects of various microcomputers for classroom record management are more likely to stimulate inservice activity on microcomputers for record keeping than if only one teacher sees a need. On the other hand, if all teachers except one or two already use the computer for this task then informal inservice of one teacher by another is likely to occur.

Administrators and supervisors are in a position where the initiation of inservice activities for teachers is more or less expected. They may initiate activity in school if they feel the need for a particular inservice activity is sufficient. They may also initiate activity which takes place outside of school. Encouragement of individual teachers to attend professional meetings, take courses and workshops is also part of the supervisor and administrator's responsibility. Often the quality and quantity of inservice in a school is directly related to how much and what type of inservices administrators and supervisors feel the teachers need.

Professional organizations identify the need for and provide inservice activity through meetings, workshops and conferences. They also provide professional literature as a means of professional development of its membership. The editors, however, may not be sensitive to or able to accomodate the inservice needs of individual teachers. Many of the professional organizations promote research or the publishing of research results in their journals. They also frequently provide or enable schools to make contact with appropriate inservice consultants. Because the goals of the professional organization include advancement of the profession, the activities provided by the organization and the inservice needs of individual teachers may not match. If the individual history teacher's needs center on early stages of classroom management and the professional organization is targeting its effort on the teaching of basic reading, writing and communication skills through history, the teacher is not likely to be a willing and active participator.

Inservice: Informal - Ad Hoc - Structured

Informal inservice of teachers takes place on a day to day basis, and is usually based on immediate need. The secretary assists the teacher in learning to use duplicating equipment. The experienced teacher gives advice to new teachers on arranging sequences of learning, handling the distrupting students and the like. Teachers who have learned something at a conference informally share those things they are excited about to other teachers. Appropriate materials, selected journal articles and the like are shared by school staff members as they seek to improve their teaching or to reduce time spent in non-productive activities both in and out of the classroom.

Administrators and supervisors engage in inservice of teachers and staff informally as they confer with teachers and provide assistance in the attainment of suitable materials and appropriate teaching strategies.

Ad hoc inservice is more formal than the above but is based on immediate need of either the teachers, the administrators or some other agency or group. New equipment, new instructional materials, or new procedures established by the board of education often stimulate ad hoc inservice education. Ad hoc inservice also occurs when several teachers express a need for inservice on a particular topic at the same time.

Structured inservice is usually ongoing and a part of teachers' contracts. Sometimes days before the school year begins are used for this purpose. Some districts allocate several days or half days to inservice activities and parents of students are notified and expected to make arrangements for the care of their children during that time. Sometimes the topics are selected and the inservice planned by administrators. Sometimes it is the responsibility of the professional organization. Sometimes committees of administrative staff and teachers share this task.

Each of these forms have advantages and disadvantages. Informal inservice can be tailored to individual teacher's needs at the moment, can be highly personalized, and does not require teachers who do not share the need to participate. However, it may not be efficient to explain the same content to twenty different teachers in one week. The techniques suggested by a teacher to a beginner may be contrary to quality education or appropriate treatment of students. Teachers needing inservice may not know what they need to ask and may be overlooked completely if the informal system of inservice is the only system used.

The ad hoc inservice can be used when needs arise and several teachers have the same need. It is not necessary to require all to participate. Because it is not part of the organized structure ad hoc inservice usually occurs during the teachers personal time. Quality control is somewhat better than informal inservice but because the needs may arise quickly, the planners may not have sufficient time to prepare a high quality inservice activity.

Formal structured inservice can be planned in advance to insure a high quality activity. All teachers are required to participate so unless there are choices for teachers it may not fit the needs of individual teachers. Because formal inservice activities are planned far in advance they may no longer be timely when they take place. Teachers may consider them routine and a waste of time.

Developing Structured Inservice Education For Teachers

Inservice education may be planned by administrators and supervisors, by professional organizations, by committees of teachers or by a combination of the above. Regardless of who does the planning the following steps should be addressed:

1. Select tentative inservice topics based on input from teachers, supervisors and others.

2. Define teaching effectiveness in relationship to tentative topic. Concern could focus on cognitive, affective and psychomotor development or on social and emotional climates. Teaching effectiveness may be defined as increasing classtime devoted to instruction.

3. Measure current levels of effectiveness relative to the topics. If all students in fifth grade are reading at or

above grade level there may be no reason to spend inservice time on teaching of reading.

4. Determine which topic(s) will receive inservice resources.

5. Select strategy for inservice education.

   a. What group or groups will participate?
   b. Will it be required or voluntary?
   c. Will it be on site or away?
   d. Will there be options available?
   e. Determine alternatives, activities and resources needed for each option.
   f. Evaluate likelihood of success with each option.
   g. Select appropriate option.

6. Conduct inservice activities.

7. Evaluate inservice activities.

   a. short term versus long term attitudes
   b. affective versus cognitive
   c. Did teaching effectiveness improve?

Fostering Informal Inservice Education For Teachers

Formal and structured inservice is planned with established goals and objectives while informal inservice is personalized on the spot education. Administrators concerned about improving the frequency and quality of inservice education will take steps aimed at its promotion. The first step would be to determine the extent of informal inservice present in a building. Determine what aspects of the school seem to promote teachers assisting teachers, administrators assisting teachers, and school staff assisting teachers. What aspects of the school seem to inhibit positive interchange of ideas and assistance among staff members?

Following are questions that might assist one in determining whether the school fosters or inhibits informal inservice.

1. Do formal inservice activities lead to continued discussion between teachers and other school staff members?

2. Is adequate time scheduled during the working week for teachers to talk to other teachers teaching the same subjects or grades?

3. Does routine patrol of halls, restrooms and the like consume too much of a teacher's unassigned time?

4. Does scheduling for efficiency in the lunchroom take precedence over adequate time for teachers to have an unhurried duty free lunch time to share ideas and experiences?

5. Do administrators put priority on helping teachers become more effective or do routines of enforcing rules and regulations, handling disruptive students, and managing the extra curricular activities consume all of their time?

6. Does the administration promote cooperation among teachers or do they put teachers in competition with one another?

7. Does the administration serve as role models treating teachers in the same manner that teachers are expected to treat students?

8. Is adequate consideration given to teachers ideas and concerns?

9. Does the administration promote a sense of community among the teachers?

10. Are department heads expected and given time to encourage cooperation in goal development, curricular evaluation, etc., or are they merely designated to prepare reports and pass information to teachers?

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INSERVICE EDUCATION AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Three questions were posed in the introduction of the paper.

1. Can schools provide additional support systems for teachers?

2. Can inservice education serve as one form of support for teachers?

3. How can schools build support systems into the other functions of inservice education?

In response to the first question, schools can and should be concerned about the support systems for teachers within the building. Identification

of supportive systems currently in place, and which teachers are outside the system should be a beginning point. A critical look at the inservice education will reveal the primary and secondary roles that both the formal and informal program plays. Persons who are involved in developing inservice are likely to feel responsible for its success or failure. Individuals sharing responsibilities frequently develop mutually supportive posture toward each other.

Possible sources of support provided by inservice can occur in two or three of the domains. The self domain can be strengthened as teachers learn techniques that directly can be used for more effective teaching. As their teaching improves their self worth is enhanced. As teachers experience more ways of handling situations that arise they have more resources available to use in time of need. The job domain as a source of support is enhanced through both formal and informal inservice. If several teachers share a common need and relevant and timely inservice education is available teachers tend to feel positively toward both those with whom they share the activity and toward those who plan the activity. This makes it easier for teachers to ask for or to give support to each other when necessary. The friendship domain can be an outgrowth of the inservice activities. In spite of the fact that most of a teacher's day is spent interacting with people very little is spent with persons who have the potential of becoming friends. Most is spent within a single classroom with youngsters rather than with adults. Inservice can be a time for interacting with adults. This will enable a teacher to assess whether or not he or she wishes to pursue a closer friendship with another teacher.